

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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November 13, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Russian Troops in Cuba -- Press Conference

1. Attached is a press item regarding the President's luncheon with some Ohio editors on November 6. The item says that "...he (the President) expects nearly all of them (the Russians) to be out by the end of the year." Another item is attached which says "...The President's statement that the Soviet troops might be out of Cuba by the end of the year was the most optimistic on the subject since they landed in Cuba more than a year ago...."

2. This sort of public line strikes me as somewhat dangerous -- i. e. if the end of the year rolls around (and we are almost there) and several thousand Russians still remain in Cuba, overly optimistic expressions by the President now may come back to haunt him. It seems to me that the troop issue is presently working in his favor and that this will continue as long as he plays it conservatively and avoids building up excessive public expectations. I would even go so far as to say that it is better to play a conservative, low-key numbers game about the present situation than to forecast the future.

60

Gordon Chase

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JFK Lunches With Ohio Editors

W.D. News 11/17/63

President Mystified by Business Opposition

By DICK THORNBURG

Editor,
The Cincinnati Post & Times-Star

What mystifies President Kennedy is: Why are businessmen against him?

The stock market, the President said, is a reliable indicator of the state of business and profits. The market is near record highs and that means business is good. So what's everybody mad about?

The President made these remarks at a luncheon for 20 Ohio editors and publishers yesterday.

HOURS CUT

He plugged his tax cut bill, now stuck in Congress. If the tax bill passes, he said, the country will avoid a recession. The cuts would add \$30 \$40 billion to the gross national product, he said. If it doesn't pass, it might mean a recession; and if one comes, it likely would start in the summer of 1964, he said, and would hit the big industrial states hardest—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois and Massachusetts.

A recession also would in-

crease the pressure from labor unions for a 35-hour week and he feels we're not ready for a cut in hours now. If the work week were cut, the President said, it would mean higher prices and would price our products out of world markets.

Also, the President feels, this is no time to balance the budget. To do so would only hasten a recession, he said. He conceded a balanced budget would be desirable when the country can afford it, but it can't now.

If the budget were balanced arbitrarily and a recession resulted, our problems would be compounded, he said.

The President was in good spirits and appeared in excellent health. He was informal and relaxed.

BIG PROBLEM

The balance of payments—outgo to foreign countries balanced against income from abroad—is a much more serious problem than a balanced budget, he felt.

Tourists take about \$1.9 billion out of the country each year, he said. Add to

that our foreign aid and it really totals up to a serious problem, he emphasized.

Next year will be a campaign year and maybe everybody will stay home and, he added, with a smile, that includes his own family.

The President said most of the Russians are out of Cuba now and he expects nearly all of them to be out by the end of the year. The reason for their departure, he said, is that their work is done—the work of training the Cubans.

One editor called the President a master political strategist. Yeh, by 120,000 votes, the President said with a laugh.

In reply to questions, the President made some references to possible opponents in 1964. He felt the chief difference between him and New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller is that the President

is in and Gov. Rockefeller is out.

GOOFED

He said running for the presidency is excellent training for being President. He felt that Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater had made a political mistake by his remark about selling TVA.

He felt that most of the editors around the table were Republicans and he challenged them to try to nominate a man who reflected their thinking and put it to the test at the polls.

On Gov. William Scranton of Pennsylvania, the President said he knew very little about where Mr. Scranton stands on political questions.

They set a good table at the White House. For lunch, we had crab meat thermidor, sirloin steak, waffle potatoes, peas and a gooey dessert; red wine with the steak.

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THE WASHINGTON POST

Sunday, Nov. 10, 1963

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JFK Sees Cuba Troop Pullout

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Staff Reporter

President Kennedy now believes that most of the Soviet troops in Cuba will be withdrawn by the end of the year.

He expressed his optimism before a group of Ohio editors last week, and Friday Secretary of State Dean Rusk told his news conference that there have been some "significant withdrawals" of Soviet troops.

Despite the decline in the number of troops, the Administration in recent weeks has refused to discuss numbers, and Republicans have continued to attack the Administration because of the presence of Russians in the hemisphere.

Despite Republican charges, the President believes, he told the editors at a White House luncheon, that Premier Fidel Castro's prestige in Latin America has declined because he permitted the Russians to enter in the first place.

The President also told the editors, they reported after the luncheon, that the Russians have completed work in training Cubans.

The President's statement that the Soviet troops might be out of Cuba by the end of the year was the most optimistic on the subject since they landed in Cuba more than a year ago.

At the height of the crisis, an estimated 21,000 or 22,000 Soviet troops were on the island. On April 3, the President said there were about 12,000 left.

Last month, there were reports that fewer than 7600 remained.

At his last news conference Nov. 1, Mr. Kennedy declined to give a figure. "All I can say is that the numbers have steadily been reduced, and in the last two months there have been further reductions," he said.

There has been "a marked decrease" since January, the President added.

Rusk said Friday that the economic situation in Cuba is "very tight" and that the Castro regime is having "considerable difficulty." He did not elaborate.

On Thursday, a subcommittee of the House Republican Policy Committee charged in a special report that the Administration was attempting to sweep the "Cuban affairs under the rug."

Rep. Durward G. Hall (R-Mo.), a member of the Policy Committee, said some of the Russian units that have left have been replaced by Czech and other non-Cuban units.